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RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0197
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
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RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1265
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3306
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2692
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 BISHKEK 000175

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/FO (DAS KROL)
SCA/CEN (GORKOWSKI)

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/27/2019
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MOPS](#) [PGOV](#) [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [KG](#)
SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR TO REVIEW MANAS PROPOSAL WITH PRESIDENT
BAKIYEV

REF: A. STATE 9012
[1](#)B. STATE 17012

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Classified By: Amb. Tatiana Gfoeller, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Sarbayev informed the Ambassador February 27 that he had arranged a meeting for the Ambassador on March 2 with President Bakiyev for a discussion about Manas Air Base. Bakiyev, Sarbayev said, is well aware of the U.S. proposal and subsequent demarche, and suggested that a successful outcome of the meeting would be agreement on a negotiating team traveling to Bishkek. He confirmed that negotiations would be based on the February 2 U.S. proposal, and suggested an emphasis on economic components of bilateral cooperation. He foresaw Manas Air Base being renamed a "logistics hub" with a reduced U.S. profile. It is important for Kyrgyzstan to "save face," he argued, in light of significant Russian pressure. Sarbayev urged the United States to enhance international support for Kyrgyzstan's hosting of this facility by having United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon visit Kyrgyzstan during his previously scheduled April visit to Central Asia, where the Secretary General could praise Kyrgyzstan's contribution to efforts in Afghanistan. A similar visit by Afghanistan's President Karzai, he noted, would provide useful support to Bakiyev. Sarbayev concluded that we can reach a deal on a continued U.S. presence at Manas on the basis of the February 2 proposal if the United States provides Kyrgyzstan with sufficient support. End summary.

Setting the Stage

[1](#)2. (C) During a cordial one-and-a-half hour meeting with the Ambassador February 27, Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Kadyrbek

Sarbayev told the Ambassador he had secured a 20 minute meeting for the Ambassador with President Kurmanbek Bakiyev for March 2 at 4:00 pm. He said it had been "difficult" to arrange the meeting, and indicated that only the Ambassador, Bakiyev, and Sarbayev would be present.

What President Bakiyev Wants to Hear

¶3. (C) Sarbayev advised the Ambassador that Bakiyev had already heard the substance of our February 2 proposal (ref A) and reftel B demarche from three different people -- Bakiyev's Chief of Staff Daniyar Usenov, Presidential Advisor Muratbek Imanaliyev and himself. He suggested that the Ambassador refrain from restating all of the demarche points, and focus instead on the February 2 proposal, especially its positive economic components. (Comment: The Kyrgyz have repeatedly expressed the need for greater local economic and business benefits to Kyrgyz companies. End comment.) Sarbayev said Bakiyev might raise the issue of moving the Base to Osh because Bakiyev wants to improve infrastructure there. He added that we should not debate this point in the meeting as Bakiyev already knows that this suggestion is a non-starter for us. Sarbayev noted that given the brevity of the meeting we should give Bakiyev plenty of time to speak. He suggested that Bakiyev agreeing to a U.S. team coming to Bishkek to negotiate with the Kyrgyz about the Base, on the basis of the February 2 proposal, would be the "successful" outcome of the meeting.

Just Between You, Me and President Bakiyev

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¶4. (C) Turning to potential negotiations, Sarbayev said Bakiyev would appoint him lead Kyrgyz negotiator and added that another person might join him. Citing bureaucratic problems and the need for confidentiality, Sarbayev recommended the creation of a "special channel on Manas" that would only include Bakiyev, Sarbayev and the Ambassador. He noted that he does not "know who works for whom at the Foreign Ministry" -- a hint that Usenov and others may be spying on him. He confirmed that Russia as well as the SCO and CSTO had been putting great pressure on Kyrgyzstan to close Manas Air Base.

Focus on the Team

¶5. (C) Although Sarbayev recommended that there be no public announcement about the team, he feared that through Russian spying, news of the team would be leaked. As a preemptive measure, he suggested that we agree that the team was coming to Bishkek "to discuss the Base's exit." Sarbayev asked that U.S. Department of Defense representatives compose a significant portion of the team, as President Bakiyev would be more "comfortable" enduring just one round of negotiations. Plus, this would ensure that, alongside Department of State personnel, all U.S. equities would be represented for agreement to be reached. The Ambassador emphasized to Sarbayev that the team would only be able to negotiate on the basis of the February 2 proposal. Sarbayev agreed, and added that "we pledge to be reasonable."

Paths to Success

¶6. (C) Sarbayev suggested several key aspects of any deal, but emphasized that there are no "redlines." First, Manas Air Base would need to be renamed a "logistics hub." Next, the profile of U.S. military personnel would need to be lowered. As an example, he suggested that U.S. personnel not wear uniforms off base. Sarbayev focused again on the importance of economic components of any agreement. He advocated for assistance in restructuring Kyrgyzstan's

foreign debt, and U.S. approaches to G8 and G20 countries in order to help "poor" Kyrgyzstan. Sarbayev pleaded for resolution of the Ivanov case and some type of compensation for "ecological damage." He suggested that a small ecological project near the Base be created to generate goodwill. Bakiyev, Sarbayev said, needs to "save face" on Manas.

The U.S. Should Be Grateful

¶17. (C) Sarbayev said that, although Kyrgyzstan has hosted Manas Air Base for eight years, the United States, especially since 2005, had not been very grateful. He recounted visits by Secretary Rumsfeld, Secretary Rice, Senator McCain, and others where, he claimed, promises of help had been made, but nothing had materialized. After Andijon, he said, the Kyrgyz had been told the United States would "stand by us" on the issue of Uzbek refugees, but that nothing had happened and "now Uzbekistan has doubled our natural gas prices." Therefore, he explained, Kyrgyzstan eventually caved in to Russian pressure on Manas because of so little U.S. support.

¶18. (C) Sarbayev also suggested that the United States encourage United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon to visit Kyrgyzstan in April during his Central Asian tour to express appreciation for Kyrgyzstan hosting Manas Air Base.

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He made a similar suggestion regarding Afghanistan's President Hamid Karzai. "This would help with our public relations efforts in keeping Manas, and deflect Russian criticism," Sarbayev noted.

Bakiyev Likes America

¶19. (C) Sarbayev claimed that Bakiyev "likes America," wants to be friends, and hopes to develop relations with the United States and other western countries. He said that Kyrgyzstan can be more active in supporting NATO and OSCE efforts in Afghanistan, and that the United States should accept "our offer of help on Afghanistan." Sarbayev suggested that a new agreement on the Base would establish a new "variant" of Kyrgyz support for Afghanistan.

What Are the Neighbors Doing?

¶10. (C) Sarbayev expressed concern that Russian, Kazakh and Tajik participation in the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) would leave Kyrgyzstan "in the cold." The Ambassador sidestepped a question regarding Russian-U.S. discussions regarding Manas, as he outlined the possibility of an agreement on Manas being defined as part of the NDN. Manas could be an NDN logistical center for public relations purposes, he argued, but in reality it would return to "what we have been doing."

Special Pentagon Channel

¶11. (C) Oddly, Sarbayev claimed that we could verify his proposals through an existing "Pentagon channel." He said that Kyrgyzstan has a special link to the Pentagon. Asked if it passes through the Kyrgyz embassy in Washington, he claimed not to know. "This channel," he repeated, "can be used to check the accuracy of what I am telling you. This comes from the President."

Beyond Manas

¶12. (C) Looking to the future, Sarbayev suggested that Bakiyev visit the United States. Bakiyev has been invited many times to Russia and China he said, but not to Europe or

the United States. But, he conceded, we could start with some lower-level visits.

Sarbayev's Self-Portrait

¶13. (C) At the outset of the meeting, Sarbayev clearly indicated that he wanted to develop a personal rapport with the Ambassador. He said that since his recent promotion to the Foreign Minister position, he has endured "evil rumors" that he is now engaged in "illicit business." Sarbayev claimed to be a "poor man" from a middle class family, and stressed repeatedly that he has no ties to the Bakiyev family. He said he has spent his entire life as a civil servant. Sarbayev seemed somewhat beleaguered with his new responsibilities and the pressure of the job. He also expressed concern that he was being spied upon by individuals within the Foreign Ministry.

Comment

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¶14. (C) Sarbayev seems genuinely intent on repairing the damage done by Bakiyev's Moscow announcement and Usenov's outrageous demands. His ability to deliver a meeting with the President the day after the Ambassador requested it suggests that he has some clout -- and that Bakiyev himself is interested in mending fences. The crux of the matter, however, is whether Bakiyev is truly willing to start negotiations based on our February 2 proposal and ditch Usenov's counter-proposal. While mindful of the meeting's time constraints and Bakiyev's propensity to frequently change his mind, the Ambassador will nevertheless focus on nailing down his position on our February 2 proposal.
GFOELLER